

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7565
INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
USMISSION USNATO
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GE
USNMR SHAPE
USDOCOSOUTH
CINCUSNAVEUR
CINCUSAFE
CINCUSAREUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 7767

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PEPR, GR, UR
SUBJECT: FOREIGN RELATIONS: RALLIS VISIT TO MOSCOW

REF: ATHENS 7731(DTG 061424Z SEP 78)

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED:

1. FOREIGN MINISTER RALLIS' VISIT TO THE SOVIET UNION
CONTINUED TO BE THE PRINCIPAL NEWS STORY IN ATHENS SEPTEMBER 7. WITH A UNIQUE POLITICAL ECUMENISM, ALMOST ALL THE GREEK PRESS TODAY BROADLY HEADLINED WITH ACCLAMATION THAT MOSCOW AGREES OR SUPPORTS THE GREEK POSITION IN THE AEGEAN AND CYPRUS. EVEN THE FAR- RIGHT NEWSPAPER ESTIA REPORTED SATISFACTION WITH THE ACHIEVEMENTS
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OF RALLIS IN MOSCOW. THE BASIS FOR THIS STORY LIES IN THE APPARENT MOSCOW AGREEMENT WITH GREECE THAT INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES SHOULD BE RESOLVED THROUGH PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS BASED ON INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND PRACTICES, THE STAND WHICH GREECE HAS ADOPTED REGARDING ITS DIFFERENCES WITH TURKEY OVER THE AEGEAN. THE PRESS HERE EXPECTS THIS POSITION TO BE INCORPORATED INTO THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE

CONCLUDING THE RALLIS VISIT NEXT MONDAY.

2. EARLIER, IN A TOAST TO RALLIS, FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO WAS REPORTED AS SAYING THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS IN FAVOR OF A SOLUTION TO THE CYPRUS PROBLEM "IN SUCH A MANNER AS NOT TO AFFECT THE INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS." THE PRESS REPORTED TODAY THAT THE SOVIET UNION RECOGNIZES THAT THE SOLUTION OF THE CYPRUS PROBLEM MUST BE FOUND WITHIN EXISTING UN RESOLUTIONS. BOTH OF THESE POSITIONS, IT WAS EDITORIALIZED, MEAN SOVIET SUPPORT FOR GREEK POSITIONS ON THE AEGEAN AND CYPRUS.

3. ALL THE REPORTING WHICH ORIGINATES FROM THE GREEK REPORTERS ACCOMPANYING RALLIS, INDICATE THE FORMAL PART OF THE VISIT WAS CONCLUDED WITH THE SIGNING OF A CULTURAL AGREEMENT AND A CONSULAR AGREEMENT UNDER WHICH A GREEK CONSULATE WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN ODESSA AND A SOVIET CONSULATE IN THESSALONIKI. THE INVITATION TO GROMYKO BY RALLIS TO "VISIT ATHENS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE" WAS ALSO HIGHLIGHTED WITH SOME ALSO CLAIMING THAT RALLIS HAD EXTENDED AN INVITATION TO PREMIER KOSYGIN TO VISIT GREECE.

4. THE MEDIA ALSO HIGHLIGHTED A NUMBER OF POSSIBLE AREAS FOR ECONOMIC COOPERATION WHICH THE SOVIETS HAVE ASSURED RALLIS THEY WILL EXAMINE:
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- GREEK PURCHASE OF ELECTRICITY AND NATURAL GAS FROM THE SOVIETS,
- SOVIET PURCHASES OF GREEK TEXTILE PRODUCTS,
- THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A ALUMINA PLANT IN GREECE WITH SOVIET ASSISTANCE WHOSE ENTIRE PRODUCTION WOULD BE ABSORBED BY THE SOVIET UNION,
- USE OF THE ELEFSIS SHIPYARDS (NEAR ATHENS) FOR REPAIR AND CONSTRUCTION OF SOVIET VESSELS, AND
- THE POSSIBILITY OF SOVIET TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NUCLEAR POWER PLANT IN GREECE. END UNCLASSIFIED

5. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. COMMENT: WHILE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO ASSESS THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE VISIT UNTIL WE HAVE A CHANCE TO TALK TO RALLIS, WE ARE STRUCK BY THE UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE AND SUPPORT WHICH THE VISIT HAS RECEIVED ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF GREEK PUBLIC OPINION. IT IS NOT THE IMMEDIATE SUBSTANTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THIS VISIT -- WHICH WE CONSIDER WILL BE LIMITED -- BUT RATHER THE FACT OF THE VISIT ITSELF WHICH THE PRESS HAS SEIZED UPON AS A TOKEN OF THE BEGINNING OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF A POSSIBLY MORE INDEPENDENT GREEK FOREIGN

POLICY. AS AN ADJUNCT TO THIS DEVELOPMENT, THE SOVIETS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ATHENS 7767

ARE NOW BEING PORTRAYED BY MUCH OF THE PRESS AS WEARING
THE WHITE HATS IN THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN ON THE BASIS
OF PAST SOVIET POSITIONS WHICH CERTAINLY
DO NOT GO BEYOND U.S. POSITIONS. BUT THE HEADLINES OF
SOVIET SUPPORT FOR KEY GREEK INTERESTS AT A TIME WHEN
OUR POLICIES ARE WIDELY IN QUESTION HERE IN GREECE DO LEAD
TO INVIDIOUS COMPARISONS REGARDLESS OF THE MERITS OF THESE
JUDGMENTS.

6. FORM IN THIS CASE IS SUBSTANCE. AND THE PURPOSE OF
THE HEADLINES, AS THE PRESS INTERPRETATION
OF THE TRIP ITSELF, IS TO LESSEN WHAT IS OFTEN SEEN HERE
AS GREECE'S SUBSERVIENCE TO AMERICAN POLICIES. HOWEVER
EXAGGERATED THE PRESS REPORTS MAY BE THEY REFLECT THE
FACT THAT THE SITUATION IN GREECE TODAY IS DIFFERENT.
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A MOSCOW TRIP WOULD HAVE BEEN ALMOST UNTHINKABLE ONLY A FEW YEARS AGO AND WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE COME IN FOR HEAVY JOURNALISTIC FIRE FROM THE RIGHT AND PART OF THE CENTER. TODAY'S SITUATION IN WHICH LEADING GREEK NEWSPAPERS TO VIMA (LIBERAL OR CENTER OPPOSITION), AKROPOLIS (RIGHT, PRO-GOVERNMENT), TA NEA (LEFTIST OPPOSITION), APOYEVMATINI (PRO-GOVERNMENT, CONSERVATIVE SENSATIONALIST), ETC. -- REPRESENTING DIFFERING POLITICAL PHILOSOPHIES AND DIFFERING POLITICAL CONSTITUENCIES, APPEAR TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE MUST REPRESENT A NEW, EVEN IF MINOR THRESHOLD, IN GREECE'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE SOVIET UNION. THE POINT OF CONVERGENCE OF ALMOST ALL EDITORIAL COMMENT IN CONGRATULATING THE GOVERNMENT ON ITS INITIATIVE WITH THE SOVIET UNION IS THAT THIS NEW OPENING WILL PROVIDE GREECE WITH MORE ROOM FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION AND SUPPORT FOR ITS VIEWS AND INTERESTS. GREEK NATIONALISM AS SUCH IS IN THE FOREFRONT IN THESE EDITORIALS WHICH TA NEA SUMS UP IN A CARTOOON WHICH SHOWS KARAMANLIS READING A NEWSPAPER HEADLINE ON HIS INVITATION TO THE SOVIET UNION WHILE A PHONE WITH THE CAPTION "CARTER" IS RINGING AND LEFT UNANSWERED.

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